

## PAKISTAN (Tier 2)

The Government of Pakistan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Pakistan was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions, including increasing investigations and prosecutions under the 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA). The government referred more victims for protection services. The government's provincial departments increased implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) on victim identification and referral and trained more stakeholders. The government allocated resources for the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and amended the PTPA to remove provisions that allowed fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking crimes with women and children as victims. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The PTPA continued to allow a fine in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking crimes that involve male victims; law enforcement efforts against labor trafficking remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem; victim identification remained inadequate; and for a third year, the government did not take adequate action against credible reports of official complicity in trafficking. There are reports of victims being re-victimized soon after rescue, and corruption continued to hinder anti-trafficking efforts. In Sindh, local officials continued to perpetrate bonded labor with impunity in brick kilns and on farms.

**PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:** At both the federal and provincial levels, increase prosecutions and convictions of all forms of trafficking, including bonded labor and sentence perpetrators to significant prison terms, including cases allegedly involving complicit officials. • Instruct labor departments to refer all suspected bonded labor cases to police for criminal investigation and increase training on the identification of bonded labor cases. • Vigorously increase the number of bonded labor victims identified and referred to services through training of provincial police, labor inspectors, and social services on SOPs. • Prevent support to non-state armed groups that unlawfully recruit or use child soldiers. • Amend the PTPA to remove penalty provisions that allow fines in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking crimes that involve male victims. • Continue to train officials on the implementing rules for the PTPA and increase registration of trafficking related cases under the PTPA. • Ensure victims are not penalized for acts traffickers compelled them to commit. • Increase the quality and availability of trafficking-specific services, including for males. • Designate specialized prosecutors and judges to hear trafficking cases, including bonded labor. • Ensure there is clarity on central and state government mandates in dealing with trafficking cases. • Expand services for bonded laborers, including shelter, identity documents, and legal assistance, and ensure they are informed of the law that discharges all bonded laborers from any obligations to render such labor through awareness campaigns. • Implement measures to address corruption in law enforcement and take steps to shield trafficking investigators and prosecutors from external influence. • Inspect brick kilns in accordance with relevant laws regulating factories, refer suspected bonded labor to law enforcement, and prevent any loopholes that may be used to avoid inspection. • Take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers, lift restrictions on female migrants, and increase protections of migrant workers in destination countries. • Improve efforts to collect and

accurately report anti-trafficking data, including by province. • Establish a national hotline to report trafficking crimes and provide victim assistance and referral. • Accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

## **PROSECUTION**

The government increased law enforcement efforts. Various Pakistani laws criminalized sex and labor trafficking. The 2018 PTPA as amended, criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (\$5,620), or both, for trafficking crimes involving an adult male victim and penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 1 million PKR (\$5,620) for those involving adult female or child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. By allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking involving adult male victims, however, these penalties were not commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government continued to use other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) that criminalized some forms of human trafficking. For example, Section 371A and 371B criminalized the buying and selling of a person for prostitution and prescribed penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment and fines. Section 374 criminalized unlawful compulsory labor and prescribed penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. Section 366A criminalized procurement of a girl younger than 18 and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine. Section 370 criminalized buying or disposing of any person as a slave and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine, and Section 371 criminalized habitual dealing in slaves and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment and a fine if the imprisonment was less than 10 years. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as rape. The federal Bonded Labor System Abolition Act (BLSA) criminalized bonded labor, with prescribed penalties ranging from two to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both; these penalties were sufficiently stringent. The provincial governments have adopted their own labor laws, including anti-bonded labor laws, under a devolution process that began in 2010, and federal laws apply until provinces enact corresponding laws.

The government did not report law enforcement data by province, unlike in previous years. The government reported investigating 498 trafficking cases under the PTPA (130 for sex trafficking and 368 for forced labor) – compared with 21 total in the previous reporting period. Authorities prosecuted 282 individuals for trafficking under the PTPA (39 for sex trafficking and 243 for forced labor) – compared with 20 total in the previous year. Authorities did not convict any trafficking cases under the PTPA during the reporting period, same as the previous year. The government reported investigating (1,831), prosecuting (1,254), and convicting (542) cases under the PPC; however, the government did not report which provisions were used, resulting in the possibility that some cases contained elements inconsistent with the international definition of trafficking. The government did not report any sentencing information for the convictions under the PPC. Seventy-one individuals that were formerly convicted in the previous reporting period under the PTPA were acquitted. Civil society noted concerns that perpetrators of sex trafficking and forced labor are not punished rigorously. According to experts, victims often do not trust law enforcement and decide not to cooperate in investigations. Civil society experts have noted that victims are often blamed by law enforcement for their situations and their vulnerability is overlooked. The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) and provincial law enforcement agencies allocated a total of 1.1 billion PKR (\$6.2 million) for human trafficking investigations, including 21 million PKR (\$118,000) for the FIA, 500 million PKR (\$2.81 million) for Sindh police, 231 million PKR (\$1.3 million) for Punjab police, 169

million PKR (\$949,600) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police, and 173 million PKR (\$972,070) for Balochistan police. The FIA reported approximately 781 personnel are deployed in field units dedicated to human trafficking and migrant smuggling investigations across Pakistan. Despite the existence of the BLSA and increased forced labor investigations, bonded labor persisted, largely due to ineffective enforcement of the law and powerful local officials as perpetrators. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions under the BLSA. International organizations previously stated authorities did not adequately enforce the BLSA primarily due to police inaction on complaints and lack of understanding of the law by lower court judges. Moreover, in many provinces, including Sindh, the Department of Labor (DOL) handled bonded labor cases and could at most administer financial penalties. Traditionally, Punjab authorities have reported the majority of law enforcement efforts to address bonded labor. While the BLSA mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to ensure implementation of the BLSA, including reporting and filing cases, DVCs have limited capacity to fulfill their mission. In Sindh province, DVCs are led by district deputy commissioners, who are responsible for several administrative functions in addition to reducing bonded labor. It was previously reported that the government relied on often illiterate bonded labor victims to have knowledge of the BLSA, proactively leave their landowners, and file their own cases in court. Even when bonded laborers did so, the courts either did not act on the claims or handled them administratively. As a result, trafficking victims who came forward often faced retaliation from their exploitative employers.

The FIA remained the government's lead reporting and coordinating entity on human trafficking. The agency focused on transnational crimes, while provincial police generally investigated domestic human trafficking cases. FIA investigated human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases through its 24 anti-trafficking law enforcement joint task forces at the federal, provincial, and local levels. FIA officials, including all newly inducted officers, received regular training on trafficking, including differentiating between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, although civil society noted stakeholders continued to conflate both crimes. Civil society experts noted the number of cases registered under the PTPA remained low due to a lack of understanding of trafficking laws and of trafficking to identify and report the crime. The government continued collaboration with international organizations and other international partners on trainings for officials on investigations and prosecutors on trafficking laws and on the recently enacted rules. The FIA continued to work closely with provincial police, police training colleges, federal and provincial departments, and judicial academies for awareness and capacity building on the implementation of trafficking laws and the implementing rules for the PTPA; 920 officials from various departments were trained by the FIA in 2021. Provincial governments also reported continuing training for officials on trafficking laws. FIA operated satellite offices at three embassies abroad in Greece, Iran, and Oman to coordinate law enforcement efforts. NGOs previously noted provincial police were reluctant to file First Information Reports, which are required to launch criminal investigations into many crimes, including trafficking. Civil society noted stakeholders, particularly police, are not aware of their mandate to address trafficking under the relevant legislation and continue to register and investigate trafficking cases under different sections of the PPC or previous legal provisions. Consequently, these cases are not officially reported as trafficking and the victims are not provided assistance; provincial labor departments reportedly do not refer suspected bonded labor cases to police for criminal investigations as trafficking cases. Furthermore, overburdened prosecutors and judges, who frequently lacked adequate training, contributed to lengthy trafficking trials and low conviction rates, a problem endemic throughout the justice system. The government maintained bilateral law

enforcement cooperation mechanisms, including information sharing, with multiple countries and worked closely with INTERPOL.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes; corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action during the year. Civil society reported several officials from different districts in Punjab faced inquiries by the provincial labor department on alleged complicity in trafficking in persons after failing to take appropriate action regarding trafficking cases; the process remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. During the previous reporting period, the government provided material support to non-state armed groups that recruited or used child soldiers. The government did not report investigating, prosecuting, or convicting individuals for child soldiering crimes. In July 2019, a 14-year-old child domestic worker reported substantial indicators of trafficking by her employer, a parliamentarian in Punjab, including sexual abuse and torture. Although police registered the charges, they did not arrest the parliamentarian, allegedly because the provincial government did not allow them to do so. The government did not report taking any action on the case during the reporting period. In October 2018, police removed a 10-year-old child domestic worker from the house of a Pakistani army major after allegations of torture and domestic servitude and arrested the army major's husband. The government did not report whether the case against the employers continued or whether it began investigating an assistant sub-inspector of police, whom it had initially suspended for failing to file a police report in the case.

The government did not report any efforts to address local government officials' reportedly endemic perpetuation of bonded labor, which created a culture of impunity for criminals. Experts have estimated that 4.5 million workers nationwide were trapped in bonded labor, primarily in Sindh and Punjab provinces, and more than 70 percent of bonded laborers were children. In Sindh province, a feudal system persisted, where bonded laborers experienced exploitation and traffickers continued to act with impunity as many landlords have political connections. Some landlords use their influence to prohibit policies in favor of laborers, who reportedly are paid very little or not at all; a significant number of women and girls subjected to bonded labor are also victims of sex trafficking. In some cases, when bonded laborers attempted to escape or seek legal redress, police refused to file a case and returned bonded laborers to their traffickers. NGOs previously reported some police colluded with farm and brick kiln owners to create fake criminal cases against victims who attempted to escape from situations of bonded labor. Some landowners restricted the movement of victims with armed guards or sold bonded laborers for the price of their debts. Some police reportedly assisted employers in kidnapping bonded laborers that authorities or NGOs had previously removed from exploitation. Police were reluctant to investigate cases of potential bonded labor when wealthy and influential individuals, such as local politicians, were the alleged perpetrators. Some police reportedly acted against trafficking cases only when pressured by media and activists. Observers alleged police accepted bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may have included sex trafficking, and border officials might have facilitated human trafficking. NGOs also reported police refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, unless victims paid a bribe. Some garment factories reportedly paid monthly bribes to DOL officials to avoid inspections; some factories in Sindh prevented government officials from conducting inspections.

## **PROTECTION**

The government slightly increased protection efforts overall. Provincial police reported identifying 21,253 trafficking victims, compared with 32,022 trafficking victims in 2020 and 19,954 in 2019. This included 190 for sex trafficking, 536 for forced labor, and 20,527 for unspecified exploitation – 16,950 women, 2,918 men, 1,310 boys, and 50 girls. The government did not report the number of bonded labor victims identified, compared with 30 identified in the previous reporting period. The government did not have uniform SOPs for victim identification and referral but reported 35 provincial departments, including law enforcement, labor inspectors, child protection bureaus, and social welfare departments had SOPs to identify and assist victims of human trafficking and coordinate with relevant government departments, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The government reported 1,960 individuals were trained on the SOPs. Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and KP province reported providing training to inspectors on trafficking laws and SOPs on victim identification, and inspection of bonded labor and child labor. Some SOPs lacked procedures to identify forced labor victims or were missing key indicators of bonded labor in the screening checklists. The government reported stakeholders are trained by the FIA, in collaboration with international organizations on the procedures under the rules for the 2018 PTPA, which outlines procedures for investigations of cases and identification and referral of victims.

Provincial police referred 18,543 trafficking victims to the government or NGOs for care, including 2,316 men, 14,607 women, and 1,595 boys – a significant increase from 11,803 trafficking victims referred to care in the previous reporting period. The government reported foreign victims are legally entitled to the same benefits as Pakistani citizens. Authorities reported identifying and referring 25 child victims from Afghanistan and referred them for services from government-supported NGOs. The government reported that 2,544 victims received services from the government or government-supported NGOs. Police reported some victims declined government services. Victim services were not available for many trafficking victims, with a lack of available shelter and services in many regions, particularly for male victims. Government-run shelters for vulnerable women, including trafficking victims, were the most predominately available service. The government reported 103 shelters, welfare homes, and child protection units operated across the country, including for males and transgender individuals, compared with 64 noted in the previous reporting period. NGOs and local politicians continued to note the low quality of victim care at many of the shelters, including lack of basic resources, such as showers. Sindh provincial government opened a shelter for children in Karachi in 2021, including for child victims of a local forced begging ring. The Child Protection Welfare Bureau (CPWB) removed 1,054 children (933 boys and 121 girls) from begging across Punjab in 2021 and referred the children to protection services. Observers reported victims of bonded labor have limited access to services, including shelter and legal assistance, as they are often not considered trafficking victims. Due to limited availability of services, some victims are re-victimized and may also return to their exploitative situation. Child trafficking cases in which parents might have been complicit were of particular concern, since authorities often returned potential child trafficking victims to their families immediately following identification without effective methods to ensure families would not subject their children to trafficking again. Boys could access government shelters in many provinces, and the government had several victim shelters in the country that could house male victims of trafficking. The government also had shelters that could house victims of crime of all genders, including trafficking victims. Both government and NGO contacts noted that, due to cultural norms, male victims were less likely to seek or accept assistance. Civil society continued to provide victim services without government support. In part due to cultural sensitivities, authorities may have penalized unidentified

victims of sex trafficking with moral crimes for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. Section 6 of the PTPA protects victims from being punished for unlawful acts committed as a result of being trafficked. The government allocated 52 million PKR (\$292,180) for projects aimed at providing access to education and services for youth at risk of child trafficking. Provincial Child Protections Units (CPUs) did not report identifying and referring any children in exploitative or vulnerable situations to NGO and government care, compared with an unspecified number of victims identified in the previous reporting period. In KP, CPUs remained unstaffed and non-functioning due to lack of funding and hiring delays due to the pandemic.

The BLSA required districts to establish DVCs to ensure implementation of the BLSA and provide assistance to bonded labor victims; Punjab had DVCs in all 36 districts, Sindh reported it had 29 DVCs (compared with 14 in 2021), and no information was provided for KP and Balochistan. Some officials previously noted DVCs frequently lacked the motivation, information, and resources necessary to combat bonded labor and failed to prioritize bonded labor. Punjab and KP offered free legal aid to bonded laborers who requested assistance. Provincial Labor Departments reportedly referred 233 victims to services in 2021. NGOs previously reported that because provincial DOLs, including in Sindh, have not registered hundreds of brick kilns, the corresponding thousands of brick kiln workers could not receive the social welfare benefits guaranteed under provincial laws. KP, Punjab, and Sindh initiated a program in collaboration with an international organization for registration of brick kilns, a total of 10,900 were registered by the end of the reporting period. However, brick kilns in KP often employed fewer than 10 workers to avoid registration. NGOs noted most cases of bonded labor ended with financial settlement in lieu of criminal prosecution, in part because police and the judiciary often ceased support for victims after authorities had removed the victim from exploitation and did not guide them through the process of pursuing a formal civil or criminal case. Bonded laborers whom authorities had released from exploitation frequently had no alternative employment or housing and sometimes returned to brick kilns or farms and assumed more debt. Those who lacked identity documents were even more vulnerable since they could not access government services, such as health care and food stipends. Some NGO-run shelters could accommodate bonded laborers, including entire families, but often had insufficient resources to provide long-term housing.

Government policy included witness protection for those cooperating in trafficking-related investigations; however, the government did not report how often it provided this support. Victims were not obligated to participate in investigations in order to receive protective services. KP province reported enacting a Witness Protection Act in 2021 that includes trafficking victims. The FIA introduced an e-investigations system during the reporting period, which will allow witnesses to record their statements. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against their traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families. The PTPA and sections of the PPC allow courts to provide trafficking victims with restitution, but the government did not report any court orders during the reporting period. The provinces of Punjab, Sindh, and KP reported allocating free legal aid for victims; however, the province did not report whether any victims received this assistance. The FIA, in collaboration with an international organization and funding from a foreign donor, launched a victim reception and facilitation center in Taftan, Balochistan, to receive irregular migrants; 19,575 migrants from Iran were provided services, including medical, food, and shelter, at the center. Authorities reported the FIA screened migrants – no trafficking victims were identified at the center. The FIA conducted trafficking

screening of Pakistani and foreign national migrants at airports and borders; the FIA did not report identifying any trafficking victims.

## **PREVENTION**

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking. The FIA convened regular meetings with each province on implementation of the NAP; the government, including at the provincial level, provided funding and resources for its implementation. Some provincial and district Anti-Human Trafficking and Anti-Bonded Labour Monitoring Committees became operational during the reporting period to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts; increase general public awareness; collect data on law enforcement efforts and victims identified and referred; and provide recommendations to inform future legislation. The government developed, with support from an international organization, and approved a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to prevent human rights violations in business. This included several recommendations to address bonded labor. While experts agreed bonded labor remained a significant problem in Pakistan, outside of Punjab, provincial governments lacked accurate data of the problem, which hampered targeted efforts to address key exploitative districts and industries. Labor inspectors remained the front-line officials to inspect and identify forced labor – including bonded labor – in several sectors, including brick kilns, farms, and factories. The FIA, in collaboration with international organizations, conducted trainings for labor inspectors on SOPs for victim identification. Punjab reported 35,291 labor inspections from January 2021 through October 2021, including brick kilns and some unannounced inspections, which resulted in 455 cases filed and 156 arrests. Punjab reportedly conducted 49,363 child labor inspections; 1,029 violations were found, which resulted in 982 referred for investigation. Labor inspectors received inadequate training to identify indicators of trafficking and insufficient funding to conduct inspections; the number of inspectors remained insufficient to enforce labor laws effectively and access was limited. In Sindh province, the labor department employed 120 inspectors to cover 30 districts and the department did not provide inspectors with funding to travel outside Karachi and Hyderabad to conduct inspections. Observers reported inspectors often used their own personal resources to carry out inspections and factory owners often denied inspectors access to enter facilities. Experts reported the number and quality of inspections remained inadequate. Moreover, inspectors did not have the authority to remove children or bonded laborers from exploitative situations. Despite high incidences of child and forced labor in agriculture and domestic work, the majority of provincial labor laws did not allow labor inspectors to inspect these worksites for infractions. Inspectors are not authorized to assess labor law infraction penalties – they take note of the infractions, and labor courts assess the penalties. Despite estimates of more than 264,000 child domestic workers in Pakistan and commonplace reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and forced labor by employers, provincial labor laws and protections did not extend to adult or child domestic workers. In April 2021, Balochistan province passed the Balochistan Forced and Bonded Labor System Abolition Act 2021 and the Balochistan Employment of Children Prohibition & Regulation Act 2021, which banned hazardous work for children younger than age 14 and provided a two-to-five years' imprisonment and fine as punishment for forced labor. KP province passed the KP Home Based Workers Welfare and Protection Act 2021, setting the minimum age at 14 for domestic workers.

Provinces continued to use labor laws to investigate, prosecute, and convict offenders for child and exploitative labor crimes at brick kilns. However, because such laws only prescribed fines and authorities did not refer these cases to police for criminal investigations, suspected traffickers did not

receive sufficiently stringent sentences. The federal and provincial governments continued their nationwide child labor survey for a second year – the first since 1996 – that will reach approximately 250,000 households.

The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) issued licenses to private employment promoters and monitored workers who migrated through licensed agencies. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 prohibited the role of unregulated and unregistered sub-agents; however, sub-agents continued to operate widely with impunity. The government allowed licensed employment promoters to charge migrant workers a service fee of 6,000 PKR (\$33.71) for a welfare fund to compensate workers' families in case of the workers' death abroad, and workers to pay all costs associated with overseas employment. While the government stipulated employers should provide workers with a receipt for these costs, the government did not specify any cost limit and did not consistently review migrant workers' receipts. The government continued to ban female migrant workers younger than 35 from migrating for domestic work. Observers reported any ban on female migration increased the likelihood such women would migrate illegally and therefore heighten their vulnerability to human trafficking.

The government operated a center in Swat, KP province, to provide services to former child soldiers – the number of children assisted was not reported by the government. The government continued to host approximately 1.3 million officially-registered refugees and as many as 3.5 million Afghans in total. According to media reports, some Afghans who entered the country without a visa have been deported and many have been turned back from borders since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan – it is not known if these Afghans were screened for trafficking indicators before being sent back to Afghanistan. Some Afghans opt for informal border crossings and hire the services of smugglers, which puts them at severe risk of trafficking. Afghans without formal documentation often rely on informal networks in the communities they settle in to meet their basic needs since they have limited access to work, housing, and education and lack legal protections, putting them at risk of trafficking. There is no law that allows refugees to work, but there is also no law prohibiting them from working – many refugees work in the informal economy and risk exploitation by employers. Between April and December 2021, with support from UNHCR, the government verified the identities of 1.28 million existing Afghan refugees who arrived in the country before 2007 and provided them with new smart ID cards, which facilitate access to health, education, and financial services. The government, in collaboration with international organizations, implemented human trafficking awareness campaigns on social media and public service announcements, which featured survivors. KP province organized three awareness sessions for police and inspectors on trafficking laws and victim protection. The Sindh province labor department organized awareness programs for brick kiln workers, agriculture workers, employers, and labor federations on the Sindh Bonded Labor Abolition Act. The Migration Resource Center (MRC) conducted awareness campaigns on safe migration and the dangers of irregular migration, including the promotion of the MRC hotline; the center also conducted pre-departure training for outgoing migrants. The FIA reported an inter-agency task force intercepted 1,292 cases of border crossings involving potential trafficking victims. Civil society noted that the FIA was an effective institution but questioned its ability to gather data. Pakistan does not have a national human trafficking hotline. The Ministry of Human Rights maintained a hotline to provide legal support for victims of human rights abuses, including trafficking; it reported providing legal support to one victim of trafficking. Some provinces reported hotlines where gender-based violence, worker complaints, or child protection issues could be



reported; no trafficking cases were reported. The government, including at the provincial level, conducted research, in collaboration with international organizations, to assess capacity gaps in victim protection and assistance, improve data management, and conduct child labor surveys in Punjab and KP. The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government reported providing pre-departure briefings on human trafficking to all its peacekeeping officers. The government reported providing anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel. Pakistan is not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

**TRAFFICKING PROFILE:** As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Pakistan, and traffickers exploit victims from Pakistan abroad. The country's largest human trafficking problem is bonded labor, in which traffickers exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the terms of employment and ultimately entrap other family members, sometimes for generations. The practice remained widespread. Traffickers, including local government officials, force men, women, and children to work primarily in bonded labor in Sindh in agriculture and in both Sindh and Punjab in brick kilns. Traffickers also force men, women, and children to work to pay off exaggerated debts in other sectors in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and KP in agriculture and brick kilns and, to a lesser extent, in fisheries, mining, and textile-, bangle-, and carpet-making. In agriculture, traffickers force workers to labor in the agricultural sectors of wheat, cotton, and sugarcane, among other areas. Traffickers often did not provide workers with access to their expenditure and earnings receipts, so traffickers control how much money they earn, the accrual of interest on their debt, and when they have repaid the debt. Landlords exploit widespread illiteracy among workers and manipulate accounting records to continue the cycle of bonded labor. Many feudal landlords and brick kiln owners, who are traffickers that employ bonded laborers, are local government officials or use their affiliation with political parties to protect their involvement in bonded labor. Some landlords use armed guards to restrict bonded laborers' movements, and others buy and sell workers among one another. In some kilns that employ entire families, kiln owners have sold bonded laborers to repay a family member's outstanding debt. Observers reported employers in Sindh are moving carpet- and bangle-making productions into private homes to further increase the difficulty in monitoring labor conditions. Reports estimate more than 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children. Traffickers also target lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims specifically for forced and bonded labor.

Traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, work in small shops, and child sex trafficking. According to an international report, there are 8.5 million domestic workers in Pakistan, including many children. Media reports cases of employers forcing children as young as age 7 into domestic work, where they are often subjected to severe physical abuse, including torture, and sexual abuse; several government officials were among the suspected perpetrators. According to a prominent child rights NGO, the majority of children working in the streets of Pakistan are subjected to forced begging and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. According to media estimates, there are 1.5 million children who are homeless in Pakistan, with a third of those in Sindh province that are often forced to beg by organized criminal groups. Begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to earn more money and sometimes force children to steal. Organized criminal groups force children into drug trafficking in Sindh and Balochistan. Due to the consistent lack of law enforcement efforts against those who exploited children experiencing homelessness, including in forced labor and sex trafficking,

traffickers operated openly and with impunity. Traffickers subject boys to sex trafficking around hotels, truck stops, bus stations, and shrines. NGOs reported the pandemic increased vulnerabilities of children to sex trafficking. Traffickers have forced Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking in border areas and Karachi. In previous years, widespread sexual exploitation of boys in one coal mining community in Balochistan was reported. Boys as young as 6 years old from Balochistan, KP, and Afghanistan, are purportedly lured to work in the mines but subjected to sex trafficking; in some cases, parents are complicit in sending their children to the mines for sex trafficking. Within Pakistan, NGOs and police report some employers, including in restaurants and factories, require boy child laborers to provide sexual favors to obtain a job with the employer, to keep the job, and/or for accommodation. An NGO previously reported multiple cases of forced labor of students in government-run schools.

Some factories pay monthly bribes to labor department officials to avoid inspections. Illegal labor agents charge high recruitment fees to parents in return for employing their children, some of whom are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Some police accept bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may include sex trafficking, and some police may have refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, without a bribe, according to NGOs. Some Pakistani traffickers lure women and girls away from their families with promises of marriage, create fraudulent marriage certificates, and exploit women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. Traffickers target impoverished Christian communities to send women and girls to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in the PRC, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their "husbands" forced them into commercial sex. PRC nationals employed in Pakistan at worksites affiliated with the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative are vulnerable to forced labor. In other cases, traffickers, including some extra-judicial courts, use girls as chattel to settle debts or disputes. Some traffickers force victims to take drugs and exploit the drug addiction to keep them in sex trafficking.

Past reporting indicates the government provided material support to non-state armed groups that operated in Pakistan and Afghanistan and recruited or used child soldiers. Non-state militant groups have kidnapped children as young as 12, purchased them from destitute parents, coerced parents with threats or fraudulent promises into giving their children away, or recruited children from *madrassas*, and have forced children to spy, fight, and conduct suicide attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Traffickers have promised Pakistani boys admittance to Afghan religious schools but sold them to members of the Afghan security forces for *bacha bazi*, a practice in which men exploit boys for social and sexual entertainment.

Pakistani men and women migrate overseas voluntarily, particularly to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), other Gulf states, and Europe, for employment. The majority of Pakistani employees labor in fields including agriculture, domestic service, driving, and construction work. Traffickers exploit some of them in labor trafficking, including via false or misleading job offers, such as sham recruitment agencies, falsely advertised terms or conditions of employment, fake modeling advertisements, and high recruitment fees charged by illegal labor agents or sub-agents of licensed Pakistani overseas employment promoters, who in several instances have entrapped Pakistanis in bonded labor or sex trafficking, including in the Gulf countries. In 2021, foreign countries had thousands of Pakistanis detained abroad, a large number of them in Saudi Arabia, for criminal or immigration violations. In many cases, observers alleged foreign law enforcement had

arrested workers for fraudulent documents procured by recruitment agents or for lack of documents because their employers had withheld them – indicators of forced labor. Traffickers have exploited Pakistani girls in sex trafficking in Kenya and have forced Pakistani adults, including those with disabilities, to beg in the UAE. Pakistani boys are vulnerable to sex traffickers in Greece. Some traffickers, including organized criminal groups, subject Pakistani adults and children to forced labor in domestic work, construction, and begging in Iran; some traffickers have targeted Pakistanis with disabilities for forced begging. Pakistan is a destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor, particularly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Traffickers exploit women and girls – and, to a lesser extent, boys – from Afghanistan, Iran, and other Asian countries in sex trafficking in Pakistan. LGBTQI+ individuals face violence and discrimination, as the law criminalizes same-sex conduct, which increases their risk of trafficking. Refugees and stateless persons from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Burma, as well as religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians, Hindu Dalits, and Hazaras, are particularly vulnerable to traffickers in Pakistan. The government does not recognize the existence of stateless persons. Traffickers have exploited a small number of Rohingya refugees in forced labor in Pakistan.